Developing and Sustaining a Web-Based Library Newsletter



Elizabeth G. Mikita, MLS, Daniel G. Kipnis, MSI, Anthony J. Frisby, PhD

Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, PA

New and Improved MICROMEDEX nfoBits: News from the World of



ABSTRACT

Before the rising popularity of the Internet in the mid 1990's, Scott Library, like most others, used printed newsletters to inform users about new resources and services. The JEFFLINE Forum, our attempt to resuscitate the Library's newsletter by employing the technical advantages—and increasing presence—of the web, debuted in October of 1999. The fifth anniversary of the Forum seemed like a good time to look back at its evolution and to examine some of the challenges inherent in developing and sustaining a library newsletter.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

In 1999, Scott Library's Director appointed a working group to develop an online newsletter with the following objectives:

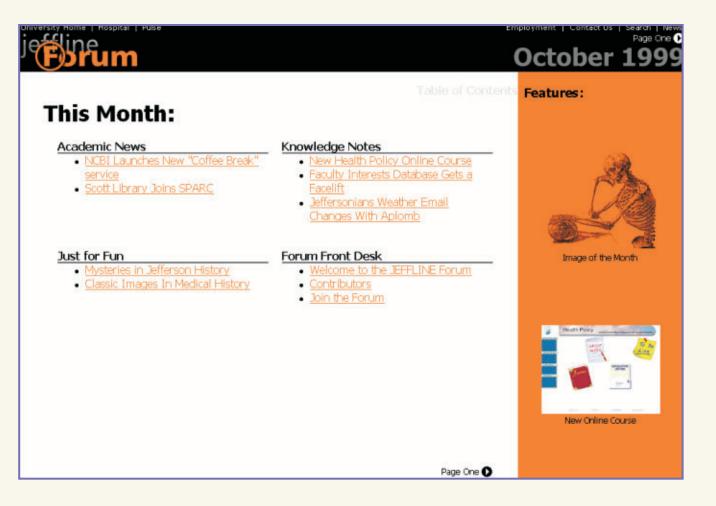
Develop content to highlight and support:

- Library news and information (primary focus)
- Educational initiatives and activities involving the participation of Library and AISR staff members (secondary focus)
- Faculty and student projects related to medical informatics and other healthcare literature. Encourage and recruit University and Hospital faculty and staff to contribute relevant articles (tertiary focus)

Implement these features for the site:

- Archive of previous issues
- Ability to search content (including current issue and all archived issues)
- Interactivity to allow readers to communicate with authors, and to discuss and rate topics.
- Email announcements of a new "newsletter" release to all patron's in the Library's security system and to all others who "opt" in

In addition, the name **JEFFLINE Forum** was chosen for the site to help associate Scott Library and its parent—Academic Information Services and Research (AISR)—with JEFFLINE, the campus academic information system.



The first issue of the JEFFLINE Forum, October 1999.

A contents page containing links to articles and at least one "image of the month" gave the Forum its distinctive look.

Gesundheit!: The Story of Scott Memorial Library

At his death on May 30, 1929, Scott had prepared a will which allowed \$75,000 for his widow

From the beginning the Forum has highlighted the rich

collection of objects and images in our University Archives.

These have been among the most frequently read articles

according to our analysis of "hits."

An old Jeff tale told many times, concerns the benefactor of Jefferson Medical College's twentieth century library,

ble study of medieval law).

Mrs. Scott contested the will and after negotiations Jefferson agree

accept 45% of the estate which totaled \$1,250,000. (For many years a Mrs. Scott's death in 1946, the Samuel Scott house in Hillsboro served

the public library. There is evidence that the stately home also served a stopping point for runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad. What p young Mr. Scott may have played in this drama is unknown.)

The identity of the mystery Jefferson doctor whom Mr. (dick to a

used for the foundation and maintenance of a library for the use of the teachers and students...

Scott also stipulated that his library of 8,000 volumes be the nucleus of the College library.

Charles Euchwitzte de Medick Sajous. M.D (Mc 1878) remained unknown, but the value of an archives is often

found in researching an object (a book, in this case) not so much for its informational value (what the text imparts), but for its

His bequest explained:

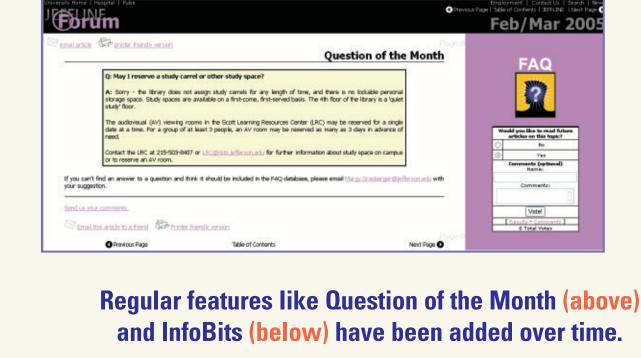
Samuel Parsons Scott, Esq. Born in 1846 in Hillsboro, Onlo, he privately studied law and was accepted to the Onlo bar at the age of 22. Scott practiced in Kansas and California for seven years until ill health forced him to return to Hillsboro in 1875. He quit his law career to work in the family banking business and pursue the life of the gentleman scholar. He returned to the family manion (built circa 1835) in which he was born, he married and surrounded himself by a great personal library. He published his first book in 1896, Through Spain, followed by The History of the Moorish Empire in Europe (1904), and The Visigothic Code (his total history in the first book in 1896, Through Spain, followed by The History of the Moorish Empire in Europe (1904), and The Visigothic Code (his total history).

November 200

Comments (optional)

Comments:





This Month:

Question of the Month

A Time to Remember: A Memorial in the Anatomy Lab (October 27, 2004)
JMC Computer Fellowship Program 2004

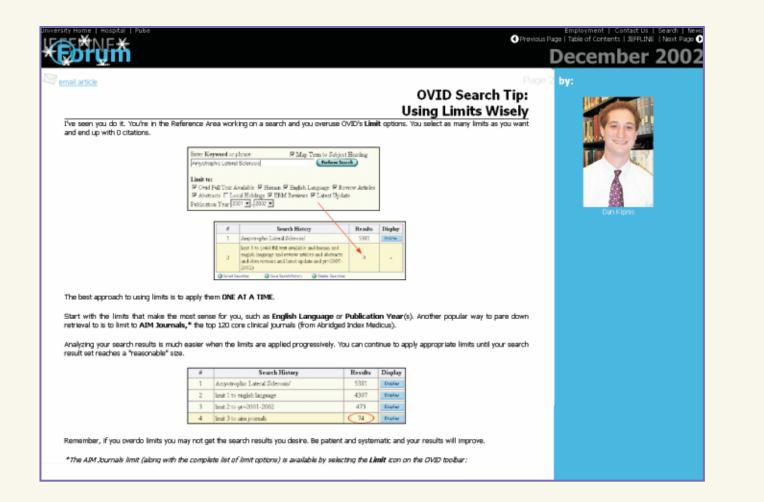
What's New in the Open Access Movement?

History Corner
Black and Blue Marks: History of the School

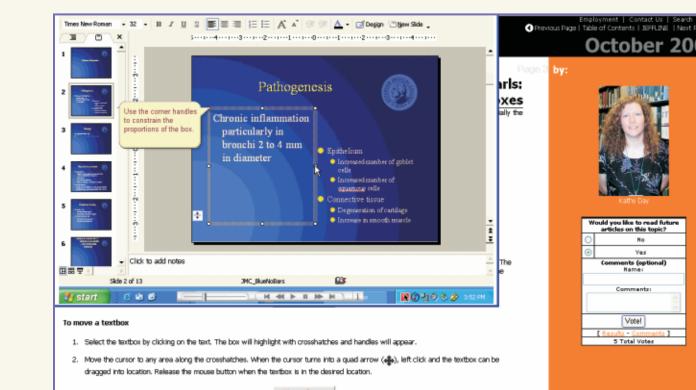
PowerPoint Pearls: Determining File Size
Software Sides: Video Atlas of Human



Comments



The Forum regularly offers searching tips focusing on a specific feature of a resource such as Ovid, PubMed, or Google.



For MAC users the only difference is that the cursor turns into an open hand that closes with a left mouse click to move the box.

One last word of advice: Don't overcrowd the slide. You must maintain margins of at least 1/2 inch (the default) or some of your screen elements

Clicking View a Demo launches a separate window containing an automated demonstration of the tip or technique discussed in the article. (Flash movie)

ABSTRACT

Challenges:

- Building and tracking readership
- Soliciting feedback
- Maintaining staff interest in participation
- Recruiting "outside" authors
- Incorporating technology
- Increasing efficiency

Successful Strategies:

- Making contribution guidelines simple and easy to follow
- Establishing ties with library staff to contribute recurring series of articles (e.g., History Corner, New Books, PowerPoint Tips, Search Tips, InfoBits, Photoshop Phanatic)
- Recruiting non-library staff to contribute articles
- Using PageSpinner as HTML editor
- Creating automated demos to accompany "how to" articles and "tips."
- Adding a printer-friendly link and email article features to each article

Experience and Lessons Learned:

- It can be difficult to recruit new authors. Tap campus connections and workshop attendees as potential contributors.
- Tracking reader's interests is tricky. We use IMDpoll (freeware for online poll), but receive relatively few responses.
- Readers like the flash demos created using Camtasia and Robodemo which are incorporated into some articles.
- We recognize that the Forum is time consuming to edit and assemble—approximately 25 hours per issue (not including writing time)—even with increased experience and efficiency.
- As of February 2005, over 1,500 Jeffersonians and non-Jeffersonians subscribe to the JEFFLINE Forum listserv.



